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COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
First session
29 March-8 April 1993
Agenda item 16

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON ITS FIRST SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Mr. Denis A. Davis

Action taken by the Committee

Issues concerning the sustainable development and use of water resources

(Agenda item 8)

1. At the ___ meeting, on __ April 1993, the Chairman of the Committee made the following statement on behalf of the Committee:

> The Committee stresses the importance of water management, including the integrated consideration of soil and water resources, including groundwater. It endorses the concept of demand management as a means of relieving pressure on a scarce resource and stresses the importance of fostering public participation in the planning and management process, in particular, the participation of women.
>
> The scarcity and misuse of freshwater pose a serious and growing threat to sustainable development and to the protection of the environment. Human health and welfare, food security, industrial development and the ecosystems on which they depend are all at risk. The 500 government-designated experts who met during the International Conference on Water and the Environment in Dublin in 1992 saw the emerging global water resources picture as critical.

The global water cycle is a life-supporting system that has to be shared by humanity. It brings the water on which life and industrial production depend. It constrains the food production potential in the drylands. It drenches the Earth with acid water and leaches the land of its human pollutants, carrying them to aquifers, rivers and coastal waters, causing damage to biota and biodiversity. Any disturbances of the water cycle, including global warming, are propagated onwards by the circulating water, having an increasing impact on landscapes and ecosystems.

Particular attention is called to the widespread coexistence of poverty and drought. Sustainable development will be crucially dependent on the equitable management of the water cycle in allowing livelihood security and preventing water pollution and land degradation. With 3 billion people added to the world population in the next few decades, the water crisis is expected to escalate rapidly. Therefore, the importance of cautious management of water resources will grow dramatically. The Committee feels that a global water cycle charter is needed as an integral component in efforts to achieve sustainable development, including the eradication of poverty.

In view of the above considerations, the Committee recommends:

(a) That greater external financial support be given to developing countries for the purpose of improving their capacity for integrated management of soil and water resources, including groundwater;

(b) That countries give consideration to the adoption of water-pricing policies, bearing in mind their specific socio-economic requirements and constraints;

(c) That the Economic and Social Council invite the World Bank to strengthen and expedite activities under the International Programme for Technology Research for Irrigation and Drainage (IPTRID) programme.

In addition, the Committee invites the Economic and Social Council:

(a) To make recommendations as soon as possible, possibly through the Commission on Sustainable Development, regarding the process that will lead, in the most expeditious manner, to the preparation of the World Charter on the Rights and Duties of Humanity in Relation to the Global Water Cycle;

(b) To take freshwater issues into account when deciding on the agenda of forthcoming international conferences, such as the International Conference on Population and Development, in 1994, the World Summit for Social Development, in 1995, and the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), in 1996;

(c) To recommend to the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the elaboration of an international convention on desertification to pay particular attention to the most salient water interlinkages involved in the process of desertification.